

reality, even though consumers have committed more than \$13 billion to the nuclear waste fund, the Energy Department has spent only about \$6 billion. That's about 30 cents on the dollar being spent on the waste program. In America, we live under the premise that you ought to get what you pay for. Our constituents aren't getting what they paid for.

Inaction on the part of Congress in ordering the Energy Department to act could force other complications, including whether State utility regulators will permit additional on-site storage. In Minnesota, the State legislature was forced to settle the issue and established new, high-priced requirements for the utility to meet before securing more waste containers. That costly burden may force utilities to consider shutting down nuclear plants prematurely. Is nuclear electricity to become a casualty of misguided DOE planning or continue, through this legislation, to be a reliable, clean energy source.

Don't forget that this legislation isn't just about finding a suitable spot for commercial nuclear waste. States like Idaho must worry about permanent storage for high-level radioactive waste from defense-related activities and used fuel from research reactors. Idaho is host to a wide range of defense facility wastes at the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory. Cleanup of INEL is likely to take decades. But how does the Federal Government plan to clean up this site if it has no place to dispose of the high-level waste? Leaving it in the vicinity of the Snake River and Sun Valley hardly qualifies as proper action on the part of the Federal Government.

That's why S. 104 calls for DOE to factor those types of used fuel into its capacity at an interim storage facility and ultimately at a permanent underground repository. This amount of waste from defense activities, naval reactors, universities, and foreign research reactors, at a minimum, must be no less than 5 percent of total acceptance during a given year.

At Idaho National Engineering Laboratory, the Department of Energy collects fuel from naval and research reactor projects like Connecticut, and Illinois' Argonne National Laboratory, New Mexico, Maryland, Colorado, and California's Aerotest and General Atomics sites.

DOE is also sending used nuclear fuel to Idaho from foreign research reactors. Idaho National Engineering Laboratory will accept used fuel assemblies from the Pacific rim this year, even though the Federal Government will not commit to taking used fuel from commercial reactors as it is obligated to next year. And while our tax-paying, electricity consuming constituents are shouldering the entire burden to develop a national waste disposal plan, the Department of Energy and the Clinton administration are willing to have our constituents as-

sume the full cost of transporting and managing the spent nuclear fuel from foreign countries with research reactors that can't afford to pay for the service. Why should we be debating this storage issue with Clinton administration opposition when the Department of Energy's position is to help foreign countries with their nuclear waste storage problems before that Department is willing to address our country's own storage problems in a meaningful way?

Most importantly, perhaps, let me say that this legislation is without question the most environmentally sound bill this Congress has the opportunity to approve.

S. 104 fully complies with the National Environmental Policy Act. It calls for environmental impact statements for an interim central storage facility and a permanent, underground repository. Judicial review of both impact statements ensures acceptable health and safety standards. It is designed to choose transportation routes that minimize impact on the environment and population centers—by avoiding densely populated areas and shipping only along specified rail and highway routes. States can also participate in the route selection.

By finding a suitable place to store nuclear waste, it ensures that Americans will continue to enjoy clean, cost-effective nuclear electricity that is part of the U.S. diverse blend of energy sources. Since 1973, our Nation's nuclear powerplants have reduced the cumulative amount of emissions from carbon dioxide, the chief greenhouse gas, by 1.9 billion metric tons of carbon. In fact, it may reasonably be asserted that S. 104 furthers the Clinton administration's climate change action plan, which is intended to achieve a Presidentially imposed U.S. limit to carbon dioxide emissions to 1990 levels by 2000. That's a reduction of 108 million metric tons of carbon.

Madam President, I would like to address our attempts to work with the Clinton administration and the Department of Energy to reach an agreement on how we can expeditiously proceed to resolve this problem. The plain fact of the matter is that little progress was made during the past 4 years, and the current position of the administration holds little hope for much progress during the President's current term of office. The administration and the Department of Energy continue to only pay lip service to the problem without offering any meaningful alternative to the solutions proposed in S. 104.

S. 104 is the fulfillment of the promise of Congress to the American people and will begin the process of putting in place storage facilities for spent nuclear fuel. We must continue to find solutions to potential problems created in the 20th century before we begin to build bridges to the 21st century. In preparing for our future, we must clearly remain focused on the present.

The fact is, simply stated, that this country has 109 nuclear powerplants operating and providing more than 20 percent of our electricity in a process that produces no harmful air emissions. We have the responsibility, in return, to ensure that the nuclear waste from those facilities and from defense-related activities is safeguarded and managed in a reasonable and reliable manner. This isn't a decision to impose upon future generations. It is a decision that is our responsibility to make now.

In closing, I would like to commend Senators MURKOWSKI, CRAIG, and all those who cosponsored and worked for the passage of S. 104 for their diligence in pressing forward and recognizing the importance of achieving bipartisan support to enact meaningful reform for the benefit of the American people. Finally it appears that we are going to pass the legislation which would carry out the intent of that act. If we do not, it would be another 15 years before we would get a final result and billions more dollars. We need to act on this legislation. I am assured that the House is going to act this year, and we can send this legislation to the President for his hoped-for signature or his veto, if he feels so inclined. But I think it is a very important issue. This is in my opinion the most important environmental issue that faces this country. We have nuclear waste in temporary sites in cooling ponds in States, buried in South Carolina, Vermont, in my own State of Mississippi, Idaho, Minnesota, and from the shores of the Atlantic to the shores of the Pacific. This waste is there and we need action. We need it now.

This legislation has been carefully drafted. The concerns that have been raised about transportation are properly addressed here.

Madam President, I urge my colleagues to support this very carefully crafted legislation.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. LOTT. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period for the transaction of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO THE RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES ON THE OCCASION OF THEIR 75TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr. THURMOND. Madam President, just across the street from the east front of the U.S. Capitol stands the Minute Man Memorial building, which houses the Reserve Officers Association of the United States, one of the most patriotic and self-sacrificing organizations in the Nation. This year marks the association's 75th anniversary, and its origins, history, and accomplishments are all well worth remembering.